MARVEL
GILLEN
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012
STAR WARS
DARTH VADER
delgado

Book II, Part VI

SHADOWS AND SECRETS

It is a time of unrest. After the Death Star was destroyed by an X-wing pilot, the Sith Lord DARTH VADER has been eager to track down the Force-strong rebel responsible.

Vader's adjutant Inspector Thanoth located THE ANTE, an information broker he suspects has crucial knowledge regarding stolen Imperial credits. Droid archaeologist DR. APHRA gets to The Ante first and buys from him the location of Luke Skywalker, the pilot responsible for the Death Star's demolition.

Darth Vader and Thanoth arrive just in time to discover that Aphra is the one who stole the mission's credits. They manage also to get the location of the Plasma Devils from The Ante before the information broker is killed. Aphra nearly escapes, but Darth Vader and Thanoth now have her cornered....

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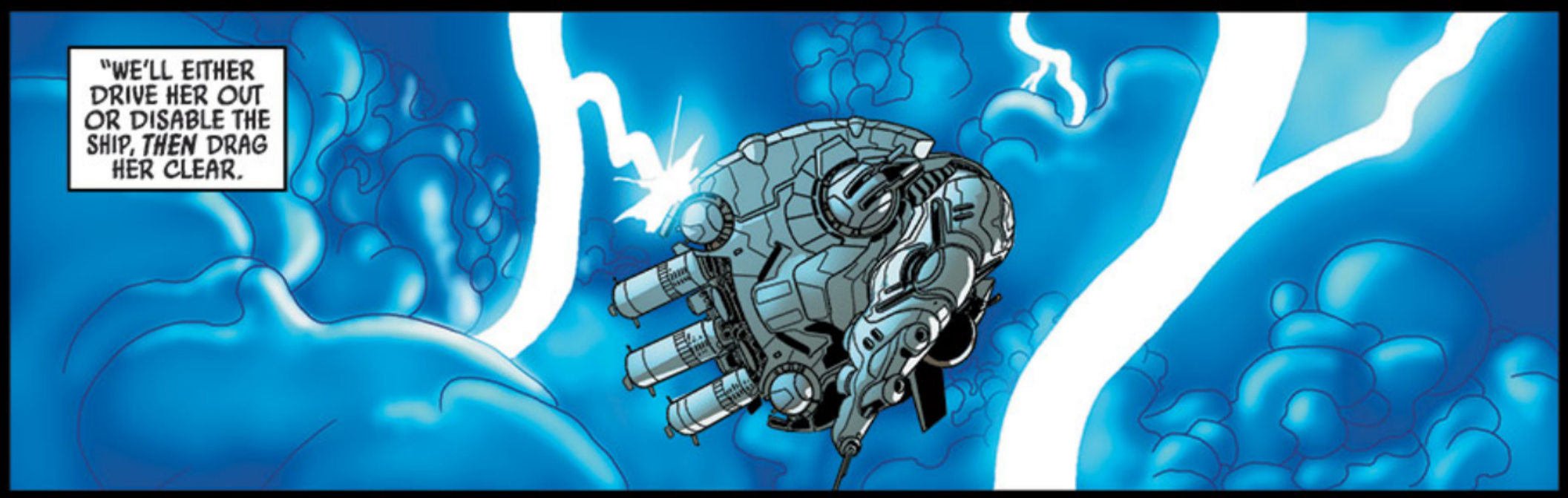
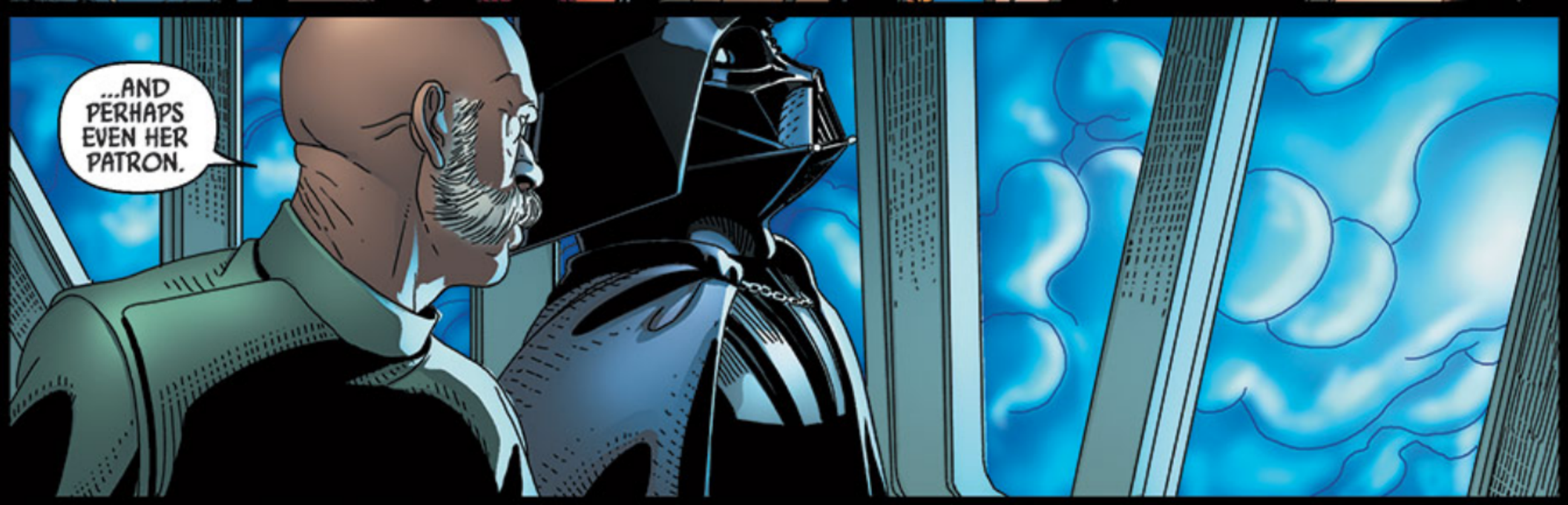
WE HAVE HER.
TIE BOMBERS WITH ION TORPEDOES ARE READY TO MAKE THEIR PASS THROUGH THE CLOUD, LORD VADER.


"WE'LL EITHER DRIVE HER OUT OR DISABLE THE SHIP, THEN DRAG HER CLEAR.

"THERE'LL BE LOSSES, I'M SURE, BUT I'M CONFIDENT WE'LL BE ABLE TO BRING HER TO IMPERIAL JUSTICE..."


...AND PERHAPS EVEN HER PATRON.

THERE HAS TO BE ONE.
A MISSION LIKE THIS WOULD HAVE REQUIRED AN INTERNAL LEAK...
HMM.
THIS IS A WASTE.

HOW SO, LORD VADER?

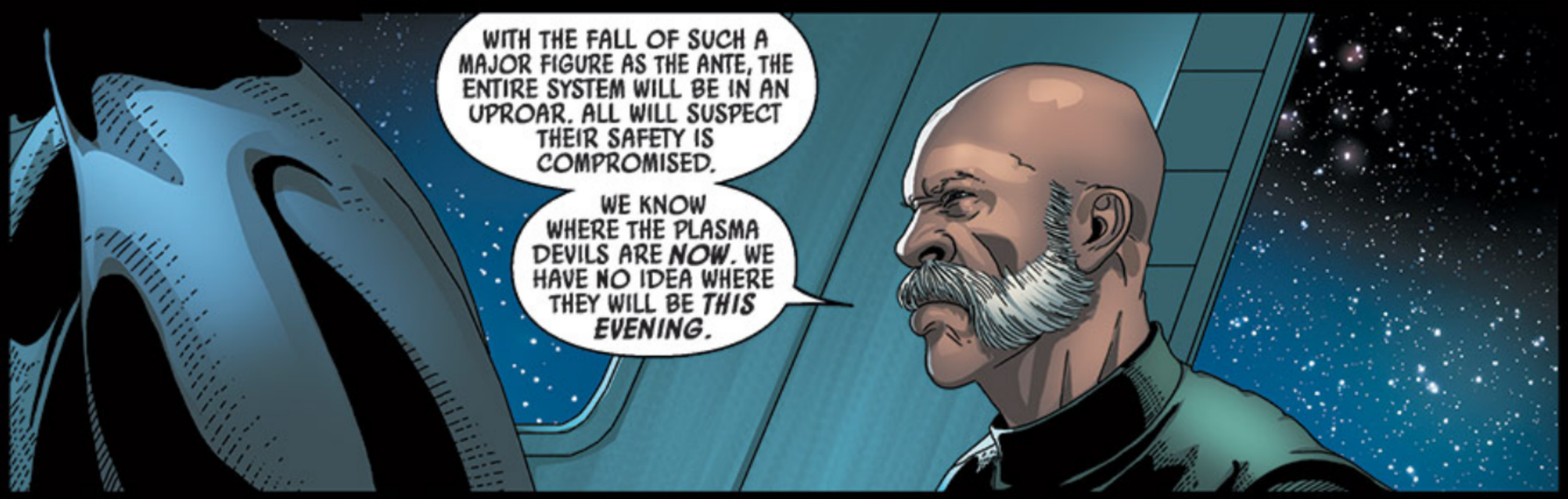
WE HAVE A READY STRIKE FORCE.
WE HAVE THE LOCATION OF THE PLASMA DEVILS.

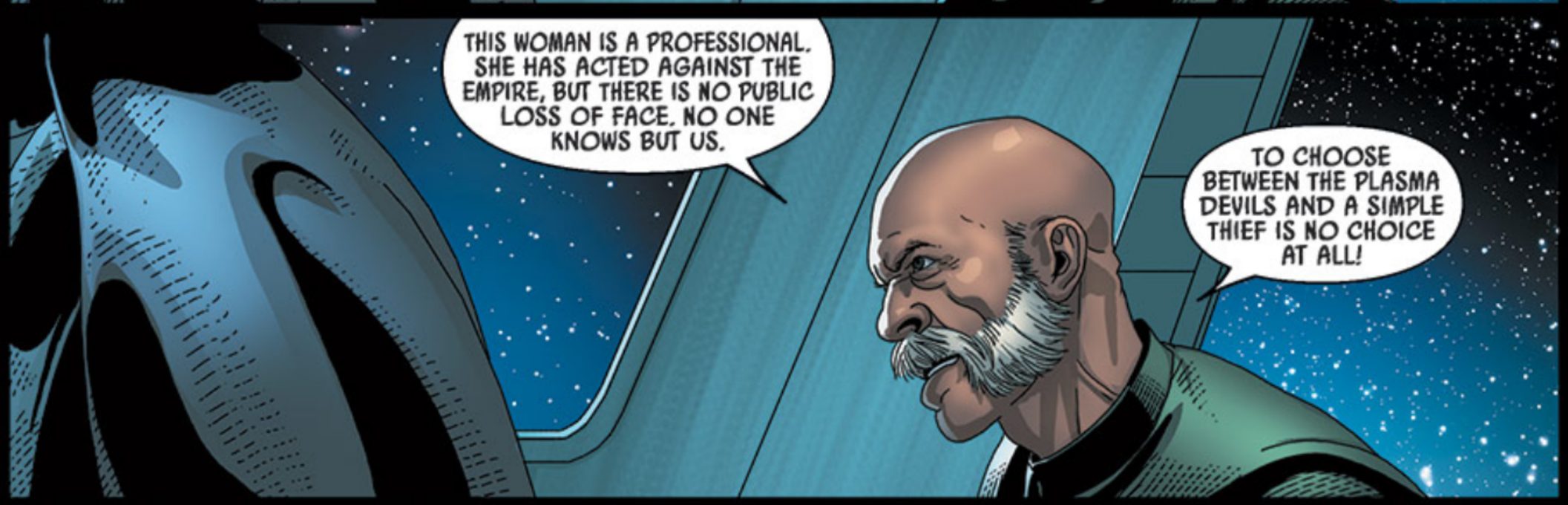
AND WE ARE HERE, CHASING A SIMPLE THIEF.

OH, CURSE ME FOR A FOOL.
MY GREAT WEAKNESS-- THE CHASE CONSUMES ME!

LORD VADER.
MAY I MAKE A DARING SUGGESTION?

DO SO.


WITH THE FALL OF SUCH A MAJOR FIGURE AS THE ANTE, THE ENTIRE SYSTEM WILL BE IN AN UPROAR. ALL WILL SUSPECT THEIR SAFETY IS COMPROMISED.
WE KNOW WHERE THE PLASMA DEVILS ARE *NOW*. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THEY WILL BE *THIS EVENING*.


THIS WOMAN IS A PROFESSIONAL. SHE HAS ACTED AGAINST THE EMPIRE, BUT THERE IS NO PUBLIC LOSS OF FACE. NO ONE KNOWS BUT US.
TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE PLASMA DEVILS AND A SIMPLE THIEF IS NO CHOICE AT ALL!

THIS WILL MEAN ABANDONING OUR MISSION...
...BUT SURELY IT'S THE ONLY COURSE?

WE ARE IN ACCORD, INSPECTOR.
TAGGE WILL BE DISPLEASED...
HE WILL BE. *IF* WE FAIL...

...BUT I DO NOT THINK EITHER OF US IS IN THE BUSINESS OF FAILURE.

"MISTRESS APHRA! THE IMPERIALS!"

THEY'RE LEAVING.
BLEEP!
NO, BEETEE. I DON'T THINK "RETREATING" IS THE RIGHT WORD.

I'M GOING TO LIVE.
FOR NOW, MISTRESS APHRA.

The Thanteen Substrata, Anthan 1.

HMM. A PROBLEM AND A PREDICAMENT.

ANTHAN 1 RESTS WITHIN THE VOLUMINOUS GASEOUS ATMOSPHERE OF ANTHAN PRIME ITSELF...

OUR PROBE HAS QUIETLY CONFIRMED THERE'S A BASE THERE--THE DEN OF THESE DIABOLIC PLASMA DEVILS.

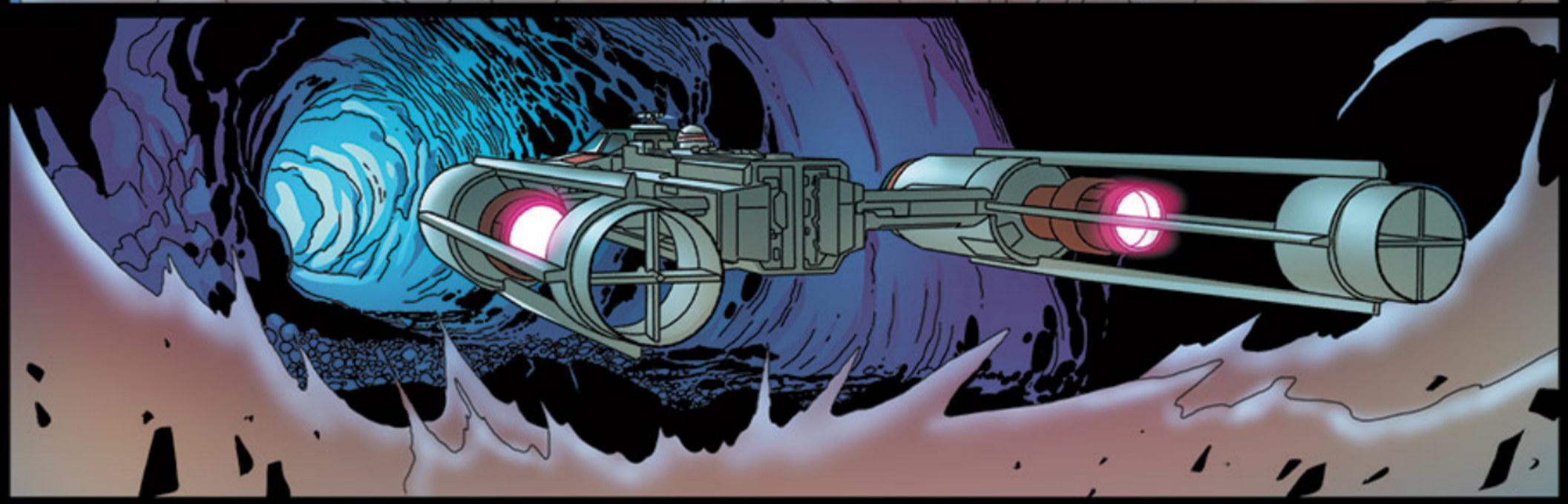
APPROACHING QUIETLY WILL BE TROUBLESOME, AT LEAST IN NUMBERS...AND IF THEY MANAGE TO LAUNCH, WE'LL LOSE THEM IN THE MISTS.

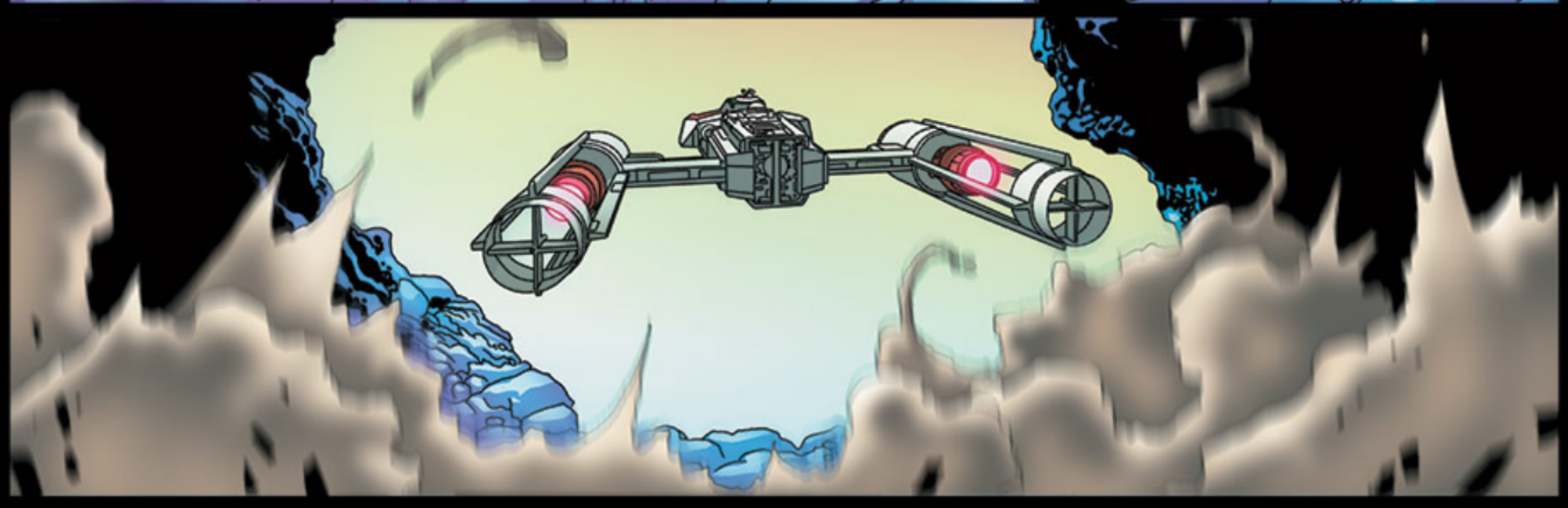
WAIT UNTIL SIGNALED, BOMBARD THE WESTERNMOST TUNNELS. SEAL THEM.

AND THE EAST ROUTES?

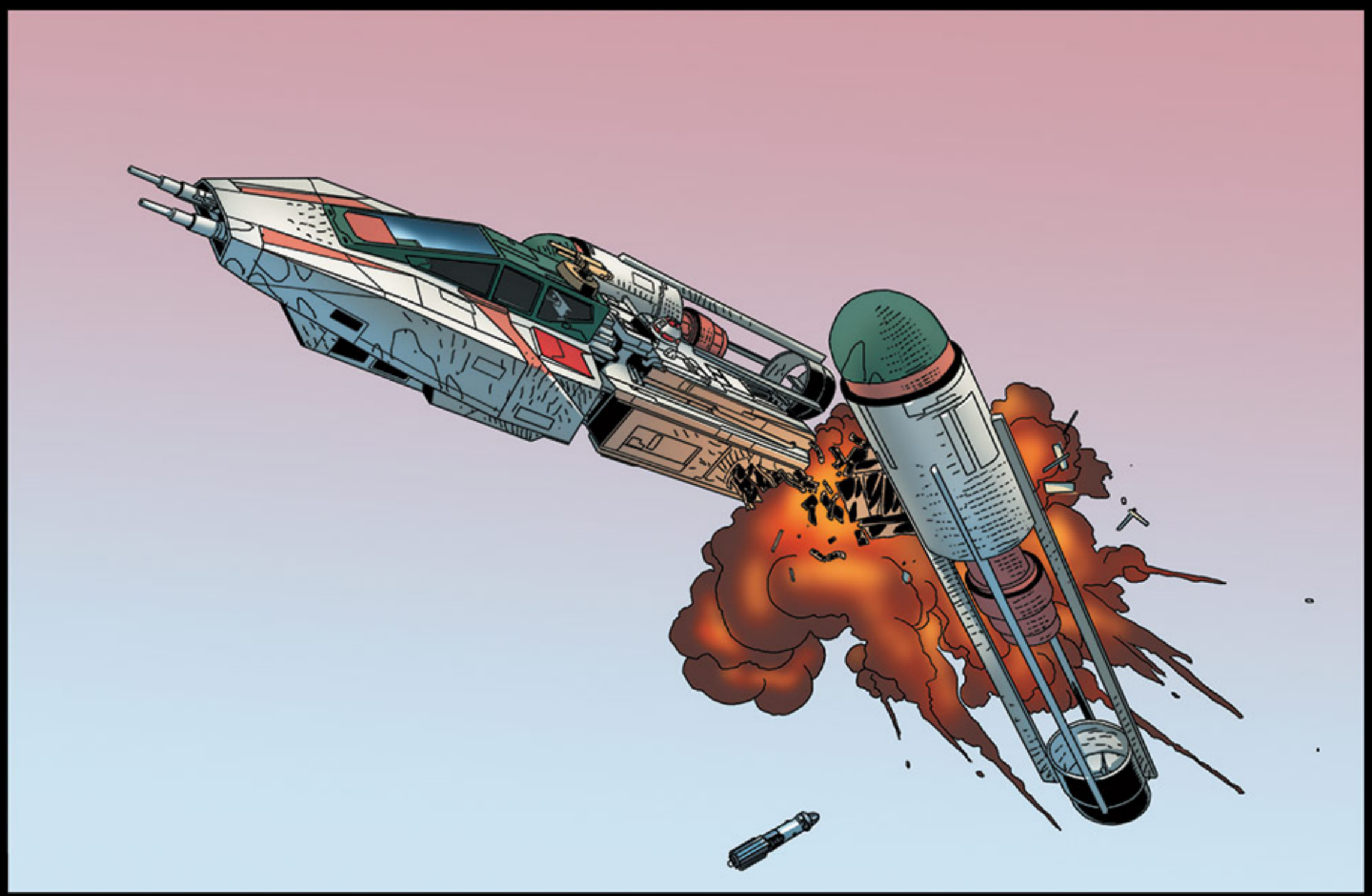
LEAVE THEM TO ME.

Shortly...
ALERT! ALERT!
UPDATE!
ARQUITENS-CLASS LIGHT CRUISER FIRING ON THE WESTERN PASSAGES.
THIS JUST ACCELERATES OUR ESCAPE PLANS. ONCE THE SPIRE WAS COMPROMISED, THIS WAS INEVITABLE...
GO TO THE MODIFIED KAY-ONE-ZERO: LEAVE EVERYTHING UNNECESSARY. WE NEED TO LAUNCH BEFORE THEY CAN CLOSE THE EAST...
SCATTER. YOU KNOW YOUR INDIVIDUAL ROUTES. SQUAD LEADER: RALLY POINTS WILL BE CONFIRMED ONCE WE'RE SURE OUR COMMUNICATIONS ARE UNCOMPROMISED.
PLASMA DEVILS!
MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU.





WAIT. I'VE BEEN--



THERE IS NO ESCAPE.

THE PLASMA DEVILS HAVE BEEN ANNIHILATED.
THAT WASN'T *YOUR* MISSION.
NO, IT WAS *YOURS*, MORIT.
YOU AND YOUR SISTER MAY THANK US LATER. NOW YOU HAVE THE AFTERNOON FREE FOR DECAPITATING SOME MORE USEFUL LEADS.

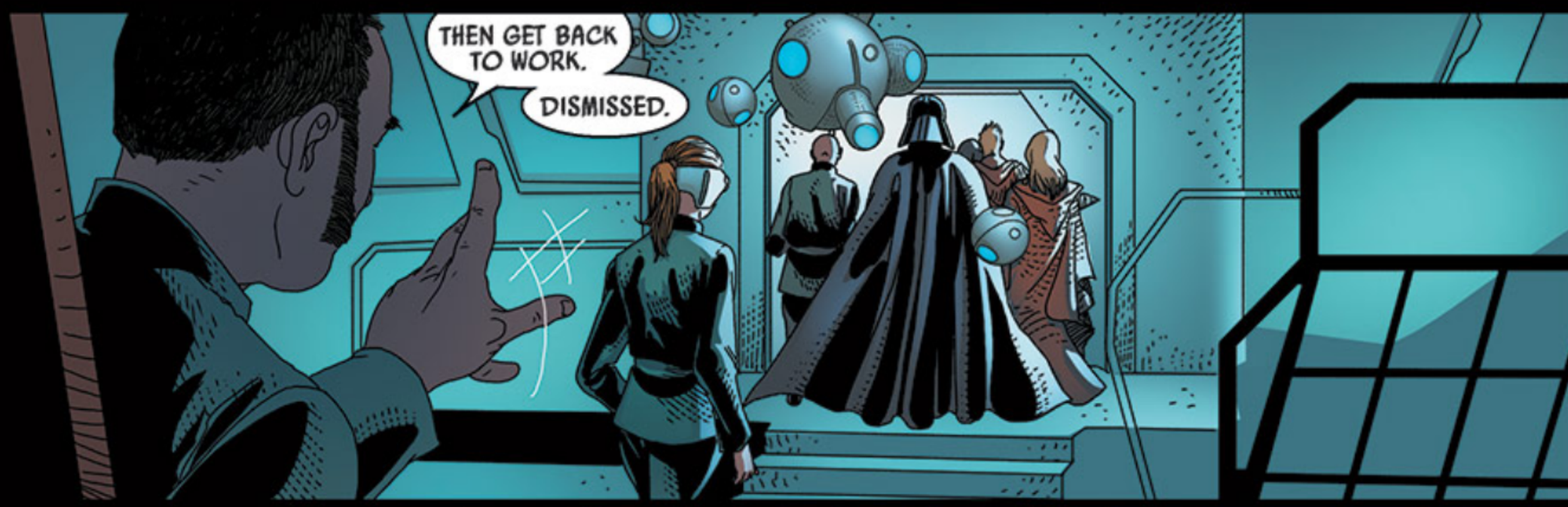
THIS IS A GREAT SUCCESS...
...BUT YOU LET THE THIEF ESCAPE, VADER. IT'S UNLIKELY WE'LL EVER FIND THEM AGAIN.

STRICTLY SPEAKING, I GAVE THE SUGGESTION, SO IF THERE IS BLAME TO BE ASSIGNED, I--
THE DECISION WAS MINE.

CHASING AFTER A FEW MISSING COINS OR CRUSHING THE REBELS?
THAT IS NOT A CHOICE.

IN THE SITUATION AS PRESENTED, WITH A LIMITED TIME FRAME AND THE DELAYS THAT WOULD HAVE RESULTED DISSEMINATING RELEVANT INFORMATION TO THE PROPER PARTIES...
...YOU MADE THE CORRECT DECISION.

LOSE THE SCOWLS, TWINS.
THE GRAND GENERAL ISN'T GOING TO RE-ESTABLISH REBELS JUST FOR YOU TO CRUSH, CHILDREN.
KARBIN, YOU DON'T GET TO JUDGE THE TWINS UNLESS YOU'VE MADE SOME PROGRESS IN YOUR OWN MISSION.
I HAVE MADE GREAT STEPS TOWARDS--
DO YOU HAVE THE BOY?
NO, GRAND GENERAL.
NOT YET.
WHAT A SURPRISE.


THEN GET BACK TO WORK.
DISMISSED.

THANK YOU, LORD VADER. I'VE HAD COMMANDERS WHO'D HAVE THROWN THEIR SUBORDINATE INTO THE TRASH COMPACTOR IN SUCH A SITUATION.
I DO NOT FEAR ANY OF THESE FOOLS.

I CAN SEE THAT.
IT'S BEEN AN HONOR, LORD VADER.

HAVING A MINOR MISDEMEANOR TURN INTO A GRAND TRIUMPH IS FAR MORE THAN I WOULD HAVE HOPED!

IT'S A SHAME THE THIEF ESCAPED, OF COURSE.
DO NOT WORRY, THANOTH...

"...SHE WILL NOT ESCAPE JUSTICE."
MISTRESS APHRA. I MUST QUESTION YOUR WISDOM IN COMING HERE.
IF I'M NOT VERY MUCH MISTAKEN, MANIPULATING MASTER VADER BY WITHHOLDING INFORMATION IS THE SORT OF BEHAVIOR ONE WOULD CLASSIFY AS "BLACKMAILING HIM."

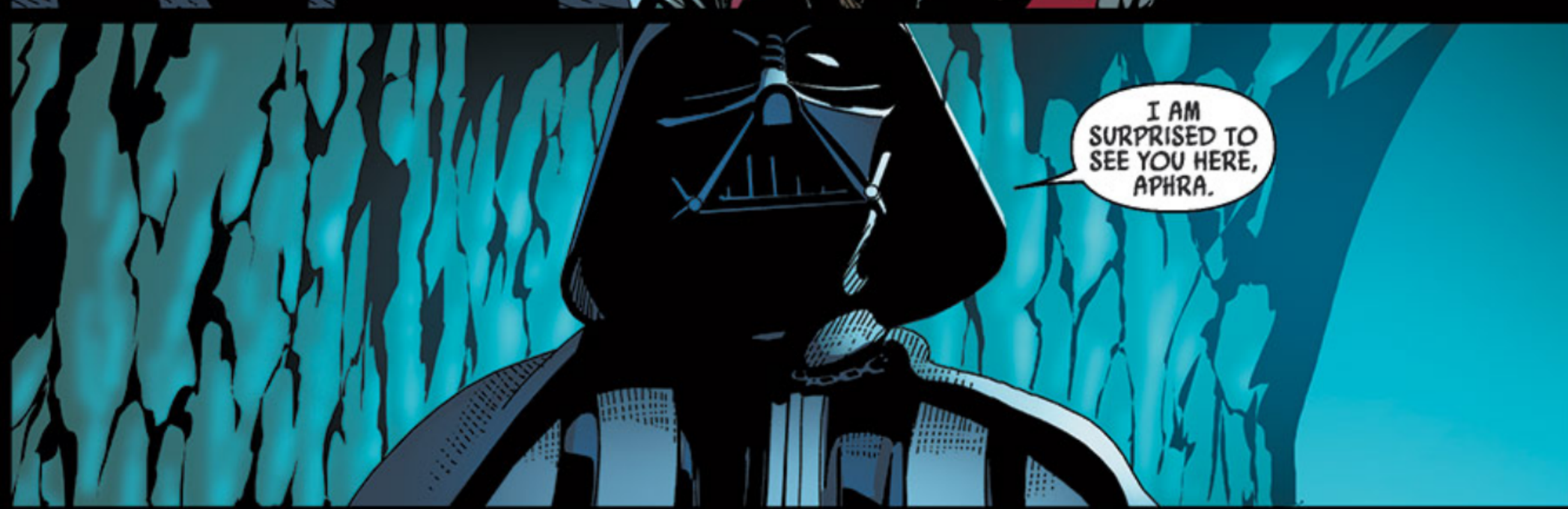
HE WAS QUITE CLEAR ON WHAT WOULD RESULT.

THOUGH IT DOES MAKE A DROID WONDER HOW EXACTLY HE'LL TERMINATE YOU.
BLEEP!
YES, BEETEE, HE CERTAINLY COULD DO THAT.
BLEEP!
OR THAT.
GUYS. NOT HELPING. NOT HELPING AT--

AAAAH!

WELL?

VROGAS VAS. THE BOY'S ON VROGAS VAS.


I AM SURPRISED TO SEE YOU HERE, APHRA.

I SEND YOU A MESSAGE AND RUN, AND YOU'D HUNT ME DOWN AND KILL ME.
I FIGURE THE ONLY CHANCE OF ME SURVIVING IS SHOWING THAT I'M TRUST-WORTHY.

I WANT TO WORK FOR YOU. I'VE SHOWN YOU WHAT I CAN DO. I CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR YOU WHEN I'M DEAD.
YOU'LL KEEP ME ALIVE.
HOPEFULLY.

THE PAST FEW DAYS HAVE GIVEN ME AN APPRECIATION OF TALENT.
DO NOT MAKE ME REGRET THIS.

YOU KNOW, ONE OF THESE DAYS, I HOPE WE'RE GOING TO GET PAST THIS *IS-HE-GOING-TO-MURDER-ME-THIS-TIME* STAGE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP.

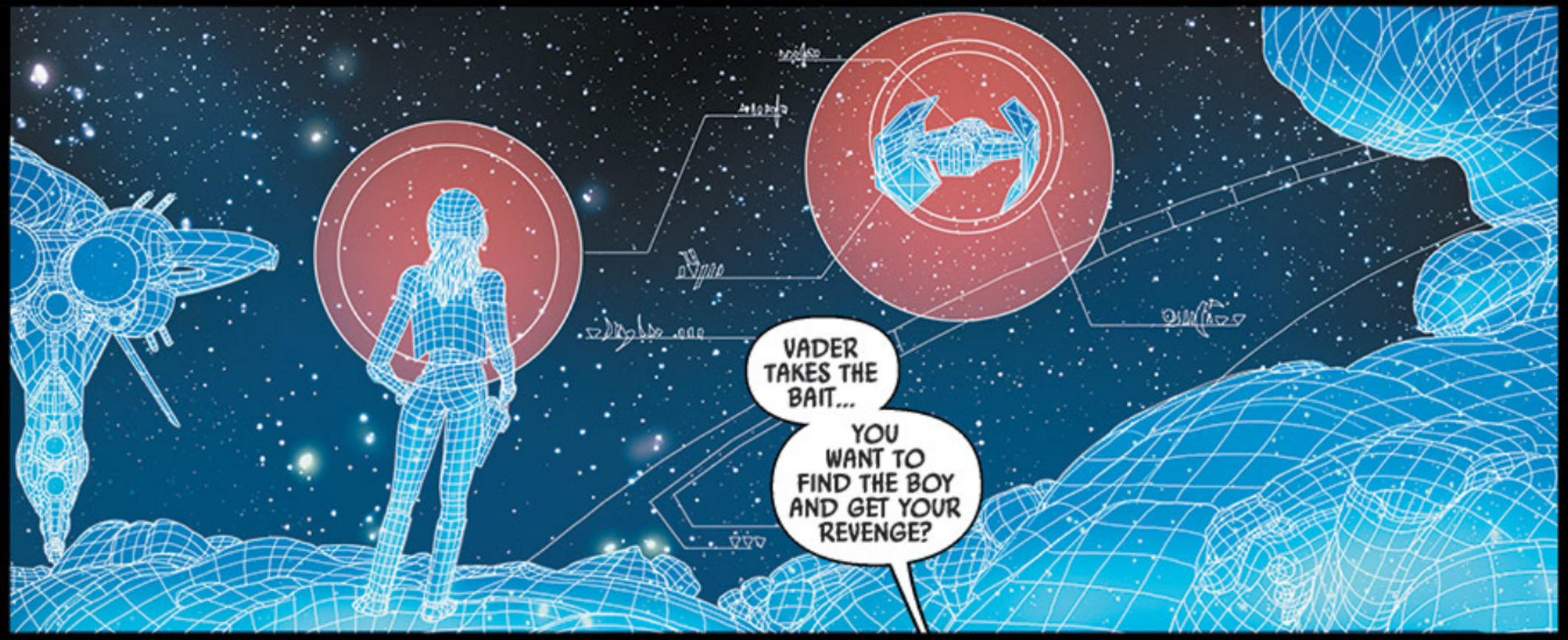
HMM. VROGAS VAS. A POINTLESS ROCK. WHY?
NO IDEA. APPARENTLY THERE'S SOME OLD JEDI TEMPLE THERE. MAYBE SIGHT-SEEING?

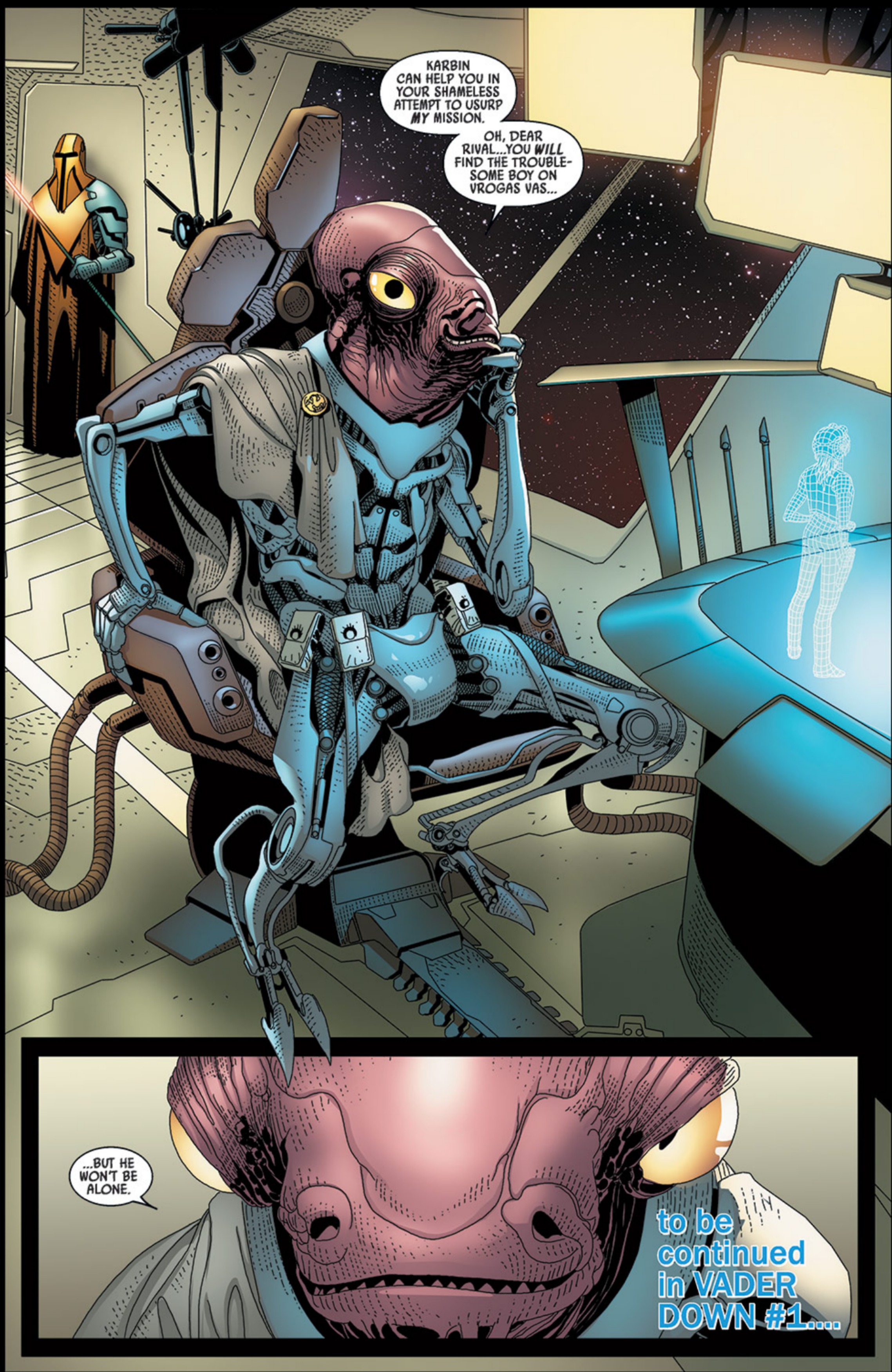
THERE IS NO KNOWN TEMPLE THERE. KNOW THAT IF THIS IS SOME MANNER OF TRICK, I WILL KNOW WHO IS RESPONSIBLE...
AND YOU ***WERE*** CORRECT...

I WOULD FIND YOU.

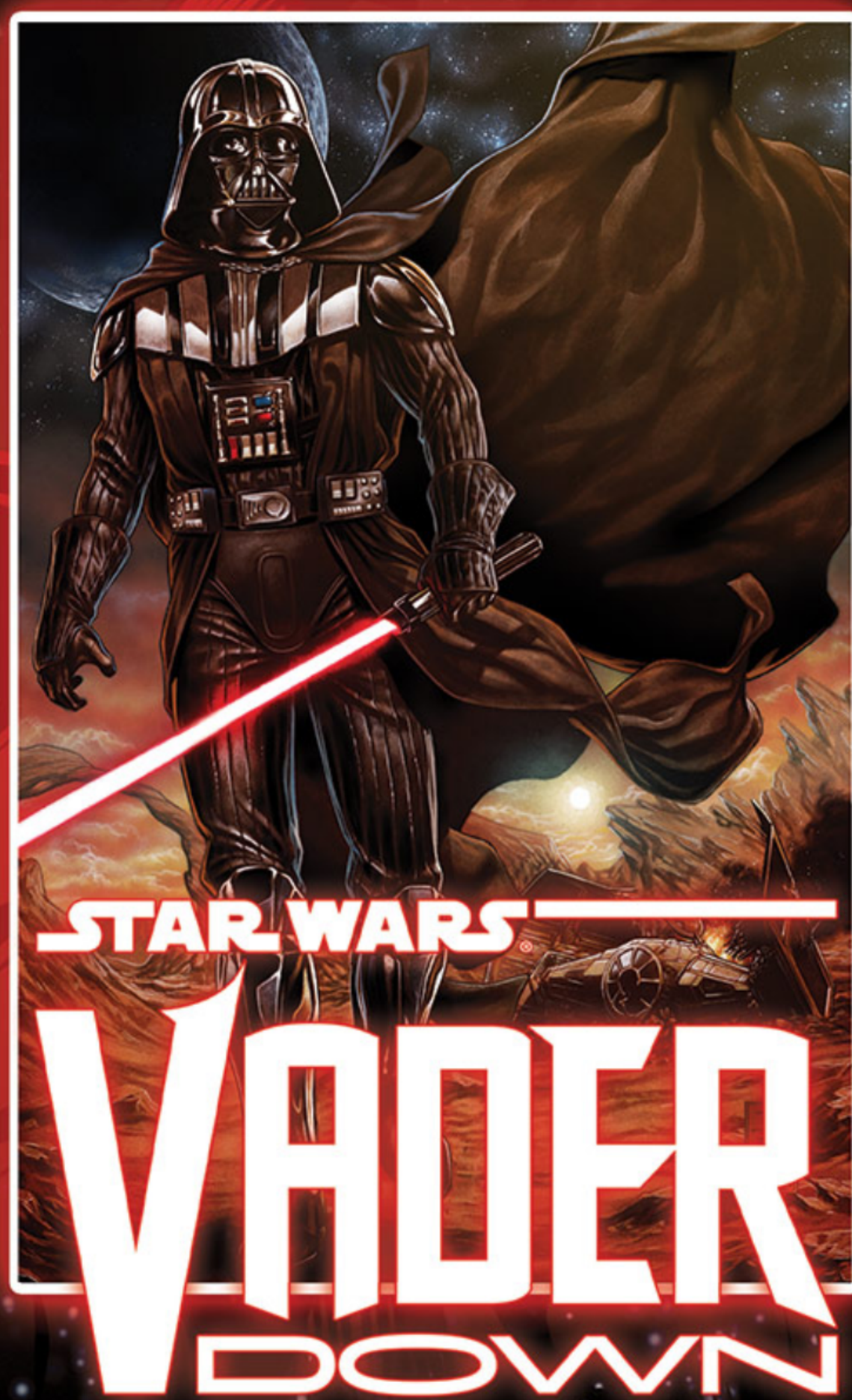
UN... UNDERSTOOD.

NEED COMPANY?
NO. THIS IS A TASK FOR ME ALONE.


VADER TAKES THE BAIT...
YOU WANT TO FIND THE BOY AND GET YOUR REVENGE?


KARBIN CAN HELP YOU IN YOUR SHAMELESS ATTEMPT TO USURP MY MISSION.
OH, DEAR RIVAL...YOU WILL FIND THE TROUBLE-SOME BOY ON VROGAS VAS...
...BUT HE WON'T BE ALONE.
to be continued in VADER DOWN #1....

THE SAGA CONTINUES IN...



- VADER DOWN #1 - PART 1
- DARTH VADER #13 - PART 2
- STAR WARS #13 - PART 3
- DARTH VADER #14 - PART 4
- STAR WARS #14 - PART 5
- DARTH VADER #15 - PART 6